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Recommendations and standards: Other deliverables for noting

Report of the Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific

I. Introduction

1. This is the report of the Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific, covering several important sessions on trade facilitation in the region since the twenty-third session of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Plenary in April 2017.

2. The main focus in the Asia-Pacific region is that of data communication occurring smoothly, cost-effectively and safely between trading partners and related stakeholders—especially given the growth of global supply chains utilizing e-business, including e-mobile business. There are many challenges in creating and developing the information and communication technology infrastructures and networks that play an important role in governing high-level, transparent, global supply/value chains. The countries and regional bodies in the Asia Pacific region continue their efforts to materialize the potential of electronic business and trade facilitation for regional development.

II. Year 2017 annual activity of the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT)

3. AFACT is positioned to play a very important role in promoting trade by integrating electronic business using international standards and best practices—especially those developed and promoted by UN/CEFACT—in the Asia Pacific region. Most of the active members of AFACT have continued to pursue joint activities over the last year, to the benefit of all member countries.

4. All members look forward to developing ways to both collaborate in e-commerce and to increase adaptability and flexibility in a non-political environment. As of 2017, AFACT had 20 members (Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India,

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Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistaa, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Viet Nam and Taiwan Province of China), a liaison member in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and an associate member in the Pan Asian e-commerce Alliance (PAA).

5. Each member assigns a Head of Delegation (HoD) and each liaison member and associate member assigns a representative to participate in AFACT meetings.

6. Every year, one HoD is chosen to host and chair the annual meetings. The host for 2017 was Taiwan Province of China and the host for 2018 is Bangladesh.

7. In 2018, Iran will take on the role of permanent secretariat to support the host HoD.

A. The structure of AFACT

8. A Steering Committee (StC) for managing, coordinating and promoting AFACT activities is convened whenever necessary in web-conference format, and in two face-to-face annual meetings.

9. The StC is composed of the host member HoD, last and next years' host HoDs, two elected HoDs, committee chairs, the permanent secretariat, a UN/CEFACT Vice Chair, the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Asia and the Pacific and the representative of ESCAP.

10. Three Executive Committees (ECs) have been formed to undertake concrete work: a Business Domain Committee (BDC), a Technology and Methodology Committee (TMC) and a Community Support Committee (CSC).

11. Working groups (WGs) have been formed within the ECs for the following subjects: Travel, Tourism and Leisure (TT&L) and Cross-Border eMarketplace (CB eMP) within BDC.

12. AFACT is a liaison member of ISO/TC154[1] and full member of UNTDED-ISO 7372 Joint Maintenance Agency[2].

B. AFACT annual meetings

13. A mid-term meeting in the first half of the year and a plenary in the latter half of the year are held annually. All members are welcome to attend, share experiences and knowledge and identify key strategic issues.

14. In 2017, AFACT annual meetings were held as follows:

- The 35th Mid-term meeting: Tamsui (New Taipei City), Taiwan Province of China, 19-21 April 2017;
- The 35th Plenary meeting: Taipei City, Taiwan Province of China, 11-13 September 2017.

15. In 2018, AFACT annual meetings are planned as follows:

- The 36th Mid-term meeting in Bangladesh during the second quarter of 2018;
- The 36th Plenary meeting in Bangladesh during the fourth quarter of 2018.

[1] http://www.isotc154.org/.

[2] https://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/un-centre-for-trade-facilitation-and-e-business-uncefact/outputs/standards/untded-iso7372/introducing-untded-iso7372.html.

C. Topics of AFACT activities

(i) Reporting of progress in UN/CEFACT Forums

16. The Rapporteur provided a report on the activities of the UN/CEFACT 29th and 30th Fora at the AFACT Mid-term and Plenary meetings, which also covered mini-conferences featuring key themes, as well as continuing and newly started projects under related UN/CEFACT Programme Development Areas and Domains. Experts who participated in the relevant UN/CEFACT Fora reported in detail on the above in both the TMC and BDC sessions.

(ii) Aiming toward progress in Trade Facilitation and e-Business

- Travel, Tourism and Leisure (TT&L) Working Group
- Cross-Border eMarketplace (CB eMP) Working Group
- Electronic Phytosanitary certificate

(iii) eASIA Awards 2017

17. The eASIA Awards ceremony is carried out every two years at the same time as the annual Plenary. It is administrated by the relevant AFACT host member. The event promotes the achievement of AFACT member countries/economies in the development of trade facilitation, electronic business policies and practices, and initiatives for bridging the digital divide in the Asia-Pacific Region. The purpose of the eASIA Awards is to recognize the significant efforts made within the AFACT community and to encourage the exchange of best practices. The event also intends to develop mutual understanding and experience sharing between member countries/economies by displaying the shortlisted projects in the eASIA Awards Exhibition.

18. proposals from 6 member countries/economies were submitted to the AFACT Evaluation Committee (EC). After evaluation, 11 of the projects were placed on the semi-final list. After final evaluation, the following projects won awards in each of the four categories:

(a) Trade Facilitation and eCommerce:

- Gold Award: Shenzhen Cross-border E-commerce Credible Transaction Security System (project of China);
- Silver Award: Postal Cash Card: Banking for the Unbanked People (project of Bangladesh).

(b) Open Digital Government:

- Gold Award: Innovative E-Invoice Service Applications of the Ministry of Finance (project of Taiwan Province of China);
- Silver Award: Hajj Management Information System (province of Bangladesh);
- Silver Award: The Third-Generation Motor Vehicle and Driver Information System Project (project of Taiwan Province of China).

(c) Data Driven Value Creation:

- Gold Award: CTBC Data Analytics Transformation (project of Taiwan Province of China);

- Silver Award: House+ Automated Valuation System (project of Taiwan Province of China);
- Silver Award: ACH Fraud Management Project (Iranian ACH Fraud System) (project of Iran).

(d) Creating Inclusive Digital Opportunities:

- Gold Award: Eradication of digital divide and rural areas Service in Taiwan (project of Taiwan Province of China);
- Silver Award: National Intra-Network Project for Bangladesh Government (Info-Sarker) (province of Bangladesh);
- Silver Award: The Mobile P.O.S (Point of Sales) System (province of Korea).

(iv) Collaboration with ESCAP

19. Brief activity report of ESCAP to the 2017 AFACT Plenary meeting. The ESCAP representative gave a brief presentation on the following:

(a) Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific

20. This United Nations treaty, developed by ESCAP members, was opened to potential members on 1 October 2016. Bangladesh, Cambodia and China signed the Framework Agreement at the signing ceremony hosted by ESCAP in Bangkok on 29 August 2017. Several other countries are expected to sign in New York.

(b) Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM)

21. A guidance on establishing a sustainable trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanism was adopted as UN/CEFACT Recommendation No. 42. Project implementation in three countries including Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal was finalized.

(c) Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

- Agriculture Trade Facilitation;
- Trade Facilitation for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs);
- Single Window and Paperless Trade;
- World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement.

(d) Launch of e-learning course on Business Process Analysis (BPA) for Trade Facilitation

22. An online learning platform, based on the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) BPA Guide—with testing and certification systems, is available free of charge to use.

(e) Research & Analysis on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade

- ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database;
- Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2017;
- Trade Process Analysis Database;
- Policy analysis (e.g. impact of paperless trade implementation on trade costs).

(f) Major Work Programmes and Events on Trade Facilitation in 2017

- Third meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation and Fourth meeting of its Legal and Technical Working Groups, 21-25 March 2017;
- Support for becoming parties to the Framework Agreement;
- WCO-UNESCAP 3rd UNNExT Masterclass: Digital Customs and Single Windows, Cheon-an, Republic of Korea, April 2017;
- 8th Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF), Yogyakarta, Indonesia, September 2017;
- Follow-up on Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM);
- Updates of Trade Facilitation databases; Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific 2017;
- UNDA 9th Tranche project on agricultural trade facilitation (2014-17);
- Capacity Building for Trade Facilitation (Republic of Korea);
- Capacity building towards cross-border paperless trade for trade facilitation in Mongolia and East and Northeast Asia and Central Asia;
- Promoting regional best practices in the application of Single Windows systems for trade facilitation in Eurasian Economic Union and North and Central Asia.

III. Conclusion

23. Thailand's Logistics Development Strategy (2017-2021) continues to enhance supply chain and trade facilitation in order to increase Thailand's competitiveness in terms of the Trading across Borders (Doing Business) ranking and the International Logistics Performance Index, lower Thailand's logistics cost relative to GDP and fully support electronic import/export services and transactions in 2021.

24. In the ASEAN region, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam are implementing the electronic filling of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (e-ATIGA Form D), also known as the certificate of origin, to bring the region closer to achieving the ASEAN Single Window (ASW).

25. There are currently 25 out of 29 WTO Members in Asia and the Pacific who have ratified The Trade Facilitation Agreement.

26. The region continues the implementation of paperless trade and electronic business to increase trade and transport facilitation and improve the cost-effectiveness of business. The collaboration between AFACT and ESCAP is expected to contribute to this.